

Fall 8-15-2005

# ENG 2601-002: Backgrounds of the Western Literature

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2601-002

English 2601  
Fall 2005  
e-mail: cfrh@eiu.edu  
Office hours: MWF 2-3; Tu 9-10

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**Texts:** Homer, The Odyssey (Lombardo, trans)  
Wilkie, Literature of the Western World  
Burgess, transl. *The Song of Roland*  
Hanning and Ferrante (trans) Lais of Marie de France  
Dante, The Inferno (Ciardi, trans)  
Boccaccio, The Decameron (Musa and Bondanella, trans)  
Greene and Lattimore (trans) Greek Tragedies vol 3, 1  
Rabelais, Gargantua

**Goals:** The premise of the course is that there are certain works so central to western literature that they simply must be read if that literature is to be understood. Writers often respond to earlier writers in their work; Homer, Dante, Petrarch, and others have served as models for countless English writers. Obviously, it's useful to have read them.

But these works also continue to fascinate in their own right, and the bulk of class-time will be devoted simply to talking about them: what they're saying, how we respond to them, what makes them work. As we talk about them, it's important to remember that we're reading them in translation and many centuries after they were written. In some ways they will remain unreachable, therefore; we read them only in the light of our own culture and language, and must struggle to penetrate the profoundly different worlds from which they emerged. In other ways, though, they are strangely contemporary, posing questions about how one should live, what one should value, whom one should admire . . . questions, obviously, that still concern us.

At the end of the semester you should have a greater familiarity with various literary genres, literary periods, and the western literary canon, as well as a bunch of new books to love.

**Policies:** English Department statement on plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) --has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

Plan to hand in papers on time. If you're having problems, let me know. **Papers a week or more late will not be accepted at all;** reading responses not handed in **at the relevant classes** will not be accepted. Quizzes and in-class writing assignments may not be made up.

This class involves a heavy reading load; make sure you plan your time so that you can keep up with the reading. Attendance at every class is expected. Note that a portion of the grade is based on class participation, in-class writing, and reading responses--all of which require keeping up with the reading and (obviously) being in class. Excessive absences will result in a grade of 0 for the in-class portion of your grade.

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

**Requirements:**

midterm and final 30% (10/20)

2 essays 30% (10, 20)

Responses and other at-home assignments 20%

Quizzes and in-class writing 10%

Participation/involvement 10%

Essay grades will be based on Standards for Grading Themes at EIU. I plan to use number rather than letter grades; this will convert into your final grade as follows: 91-100=A; 81-90=B; 70-80=C. 65-69=D. Because I grade on a 100-point scale, missing assignments affect the grade tremendously.

**Responses:** Almost every week you will be required to hand in either a response or a brief writing assignment. Responses should be a full page typed commentary on the assigned reading for any one of the three class periods (you choose which). The response must be about the reading due on the day you hand it in; it should reflect your thoughts BEFORE class discussion. I will not accept responses handed in after the class period in which the relevant assignment has been discussed, nor will I accept responses from students who have not been in class. The point of the responses is to stimulate your thinking about the assigned reading, to give you practice in analyzing it on your own, and to facilitate your involvement in class discussion.

I may give suggested topics for your response; if I don't, choose a single question from the list at end of syllabus to answer. There are three requirements:

1. Focus on a single issue throughout your response
2. Establish your focus in opening sentence; then go into more detail about it in the rest of your response.
3. Include a direct quotation (with page number in parentheses) in the course of your response.

I will grade responses and other homework on a 10-point scale, in terms of completeness, depth, precision, thoughtfulness.

If illness or personal emergency keeps you from being in class on the day on which you intended to hand in a response, hand in a response for another class day that week instead; if that's not possible, talk to me so you won't be penalized for problems beyond your control.

**EWP:** this is a writing-intensive course; your final paper may be used in your electronic writing portfolio.

Syllabus (tentative)

I. Ancient World: The Greeks

MAug 22: introduction to course.

W24: Homer, *The Odyssey* (Lombardo transl): Books 1-2

Fri 26: *Odyssey* Books 3-4. Response #1 due W or F.

M29: *Odyssey* Books 5-8

W31: *Odyssey* Books 9-12. Template due W.

FSept 2: *Odyssey* Books 13-14, 16-17 (15 optional)

M5: Labor Day

W7: *Odyssey* Books 18-21 (20 optional)

F9: Books 22-24. Response #2 due W or F

M 12: Sappho in Wilkie and Hurt. Essay #1 due (2-3 pp).  
W 14: in Grene and Lattimore, Euripides, The Bacchae  
F16: Bacchae. Bring anthology and both Grene and Lattimore volumes: decide on group tragedy.

M19: Greek tragedy: group discussions  
W21: Read Aristotle in Wilkie and Hurt (1229-1238). Group discussions.  
F23: Group presentations

M26: Aristophanes, "Lysistrata" in Wilkie and Hurt pp. 914-966  
W 28: Plato, "Parable of the Cave" 1197-1200 in Wilkie and Hurt

#### The Romans

F 30: Virgil, The Aeneid in Wilkie and Hurt, Book 1 (973-991) Response #3 due M, W or F

MOct 3: Virgil Book 2

W5: Book 4

F7: Book 6. Explication due M, W, or F

M10: Midterm (with take-home essay on tragedy)

#### III. The Middle Ages

W12: The Song of Roland (separate volume), laisses 1-65 (pp. 29-55)

F14: Roland, laisses 66-116 (pp. 55-78) Response #4 due W or F

M17: Roland, laisses 117-177 (pp. 78-105)

W19: The Lais of Marie de France (separate volume): "Guigemar"

F21: No class. Frankenstein conference.

M24: Marie, "Bisclavret," "Milun," "Chaitival" "Yonec"

W26: Dante, Inferno (separate volume), cantos 1-2

F28: Dante, cantos 3-6. Response #5 due M, W or F.

M31: Dante cantos 7-11. For fun, see <http://www.4degreez.com/misc/dante-inferno-test.mv>

Groups choose from cantos 12-30.

W Nov 2: Meet as groups to discuss your cantos.

F Nov 4: Groups 1, 2 present cantos 12-13; 14-16

M7: Groups 3, 4 present cantos 17-20; 21-25

W9: Groups 5, 6 present cantos 26-27; 28-30

F11: Cantos 31-34. Final canto of Paradiso in Wilkie and Hurt. Handed in 4-item annotated bibliography.

#### IV. The Renaissance

M14: Petrarch, hand-out.

W16: Boccaccio in Musa and Bondanella (separate volume) 1-34

F18: Boccaccio, 69-95; 133-47 Response #6 due M, W or F

Thanks giving recess

M28: Rabelais (separate volume) 36-48; 51-54

W30: Rabelais 66-93

FDec 2: Rabelais. 151-63. Hand in essay #2

M4: Cervantes in Wilkie and Hurt, 1990-2009.

W6 Cervantes, 2009-2030. Hand in response #7 M or W

F8: Review

There will be a cumulative final exam during exam week.

Response questions: focus on a SINGLE question:

What is the main character like (physically, mentally, gestures, speech, values)?

What parallels or contrasts do you see between two characters?

Focus on a minor character and discuss why he/she's there

How is the setting described? Is there a contrast set up between two settings?

Focus on a single conflict (within a character? Between characters? Between a character and the environment?)

Is there an authorial mouthpiece? What's she/he saying?

What is the narrator's relation to the action? Why is he/she telling the story? How are his/her values shaping what he/she notices?

Significance of title?

How does a character change during the course of the work?

Is there a crucial moment or turning point when someone makes a big mistake or does something right?

Is there an object or moment that works symbolically, or a pattern of imagery or a key word that recurs?

Look up one allusion and explain its significance.

To what extent does the ending tie up loose ends? Is the ending "happy?" For whom? Who gets left out?

How does the work depict gender, race, sexuality, or class?

To what extent does the work as a whole reinforce values you share or don't share?

For poems: FIRST: read in terms of punctuation, not line breaks. Then look up words you don't know.

Discuss the poem's speaker and his/her situation.

What is the poem's tone? How do you know? Is there any irony?

How is the poem structured and how does this structure tie in with its meaning?

Does the poem fall into sections? How do they build on or contrast with each other?

What do you notice about the sounds of words or rhythmic patterns?

Pick a single word that seems significant, look it up in the dictionary, and discuss its significance.

Do the speaker's thoughts change during the course of the poem? Are there two or more viewpoints?

What conflicts do you see in the poem?

Discuss the connotations of a few words

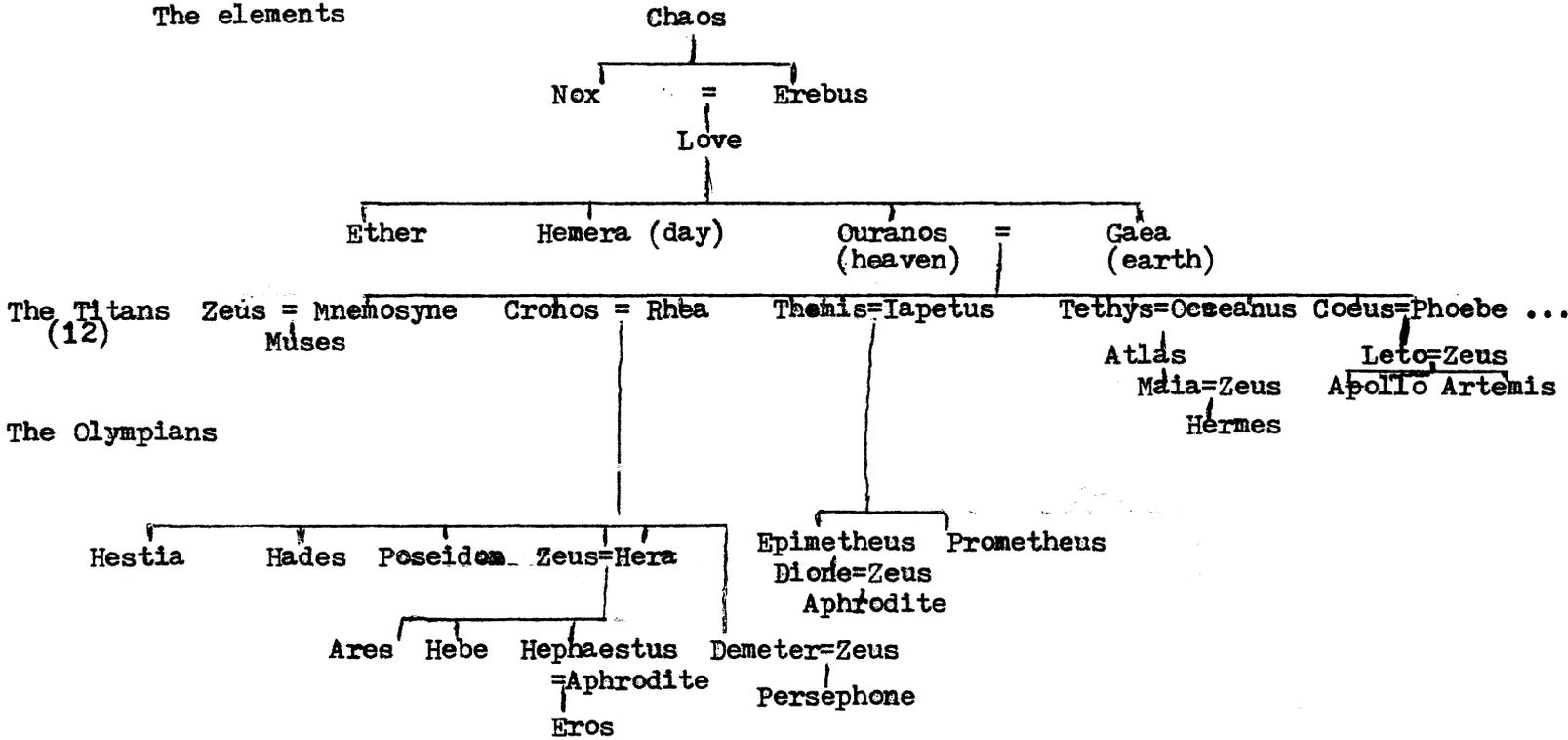
Discuss a pattern of images (lots of disease references? Flowers?)

Is there a particularly difficult phrase or line? What ideas do you have about what it means?



Major Gods

The elements



Greeks

Akhaians (Akhaia)  
 Argives (Argos)  
 Danaans  
 (among allies: Myrmidons)

Trojans (Ilion)

Gk commander-in-chief: Agamemnon (=Clytemnestra; son Orestes, daughters Iphigenia, Electra)  
 Agamemnon's brother: Menelaus (=Helen), from Sparta  
 allies: Odysseus (=Penelope, son Telemachus), from Ithaka  
 Akhilleus, leader of Myrmidons  
 Nestor, old + wise  
 Helen + Clytemnestra, daughters of Leda=Zeus

Trojan king: Priam (=Hecuba)  
 his sons: Hector (=Andromache)  
 Paris (elopes with Helen)  
 Deiphobus

Gods (12 main)

Zeus (king. heaven. thunder) = Hera  
 his brothers: Poseidon (sea) and Hades (underworld)  
 his daughter: Athena (born from his forehead, fully armed, without a mother. owl. handicrafts, intelligence, war/peace. virgin)  
 sons: Hephaestus (lame, blacksmith, = Aphrodite); Ares (war)  
Hermes (messenger); Apollo (sun, music, prehphecy)  
 daughters: Artemis (moon, virgin, huntress) Aphrodite (?) (beauty, love)  
 sisters: Hestia (hearth), Hera (marriage, maternity), Demeter (harvest, fertility)

Structure of the Odyssey

- Bk 1: conference of gods. Athena appeals to Zeus to help Odysseus  
Athena goes to Telemachos  
2. Telemachos calls assembly. Departs for news of father.  
3. Finds Nestor at feast, Pylos.  
4. finds Menelaus at edding, Sparta. stories of Helen and Menalus.  
back in Ithaka, plot of suitors.
5. conference of gods. Hermes goes to Kalympso. Od. leaves Ogygia  
on raft, gets Ino's scarf, lands at Skheria.  
6. Athena in dreams tells Nausikaa to do her washing. Od. finds Naus  
kaa by river.  
7. Od. enters town in fog, gets hospitality from Arete and Alkinoos  
8. Assembly of Phaiakians. Feast, Demodokos sings (about Akhains'  
homecoming, then about Ares and Aphrodite; later about Trojan Hors  
Alkinoos asks Od, who are you?
9. [Od's story] Ismaros, Lotos Eaters, Cyclops  
10. Aiolia, Laistrygonians, Circe  
11. Hades  
12. Sirens, Skylla/Kharybdis, Helios  
Then I got to Ogygia . . . but I told you that part. (cf p. 118)
13. Od arrives in Ithaka, encounter with Athena  
14. Eumaios. Od's fake story about where he's from, identity  
15. Telemakhos returns. Eumaios' story about his origins, identity  
16. reunion of father and son  
17. Od. as beggar  
18. Penelope appears  
19. Eurykleia washes Od.  
20. OD and Athena  
21. Bow  
22. revenge  
23. Od + Penelope  
24. resolution.

books 1-8 take up 18 days (17 betn Ogygia and Skheria)  
books 9-12 recount 10 preceding years  
books 13-24: a few days

Speak, Memory—

Of the cunning hero,  
The wanderer, blown off course time and again  
After he plundered Troy's sacred heights.

Speak

Of all the cities he saw, the minds he grasped,  
The suffering deep in his heart at sea  
As he struggled to survive and bring his men home  
But could not save them, hard as he tried—  
The fools—destroyed by their own recklessness . . .

Names useful for reading the Odyssey

Major Gods: Zeus (son of the Titans Cronos and Rhea) = Hera

Zeus with his two brothers rule the universe: Zeus: air  
Poseidon: sea  
Hades: underworld

Zeus rules over all from Mt. Olympos

Among his many offspring are: Aphrodite (beauty, love)  
Athena (born from his forehead; wisdom, handicrafts, virgin. Born fully armed. Also known as grey-eyed goddess, Pallas Athena)  
Hephaestos (lame, blacksmith, marries Aphrodite)  
Hermes (messenger; wayfinder, winged feet)  
Apollo (sun, music, prophecy, sickness)

Other nonhuman characters: Kalyпсо (sea nymph, daughter of the titan Atlas)  
Polyphemos, the Kyclopes; Lord Helios, Proteos (ever-changing sea god)

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The action takes place at the end of the Trojan War, as the Greek warriors make their way home, Odysseus last of all.

The Trojan War was fought between

Greeks, led by Agamemnon	} sons of	Trojans, under King Priam
his brother Menelaus		his sons: Hector
Akhilleus		Paris
Odysseus		Deiphobos

Greeks are also known as: Troy is also Ilion

Akhaians  
Argives Argos  
Danaans  
Mykenai  
~~Celeas~~

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Other names worth noticing: {Klytaimnestra  
Aigisthos (lover of Agamemnon's wife {Clytemnestra; they kill him when he returns home from Troy, then in turn are killed by Orestes, son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra)  
Telemakhos, son of Odysseus  
Penelope, Odysseus's wife )Ikarios' daughter)  
Mentes (family friend); Mentor (Ithakan elder): <sup>some</sup> times; Athena in disguise  
Phemios, the Ithakan bard  
Nestor, king of Pylos, ally of Greeks, old and wise

the suitors: Antinoos, Eurymakhos, and others

Eurykleia, old servant of Odysseus' household

at Sparta: Helen, wife of Menelaus (cause of Trojan War)